

Orthopaedic Connection

Getting Better After Total Knee Surgery

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Transforming patient information into patient understanding.

Last week I was very specific in telling you what, in my experience, is the best total knee prosthesis for the great majority of my patients with arthritis of the knee. It is the LCS total knee prosthesis made in the USA by DePuy Orthopaedics, Inc.

Now we continue our journey in the wonderful land of the Total Knee. Out of the hospital in three days; using a cane in 1 - 2 weeks; playing golf in a month.

Uh. Maybe---. In advertising and marketing for anything, only the very best outcomes are chosen to be featured. I don't mean it can never happen for a total knee replacement patient, but perhaps you should not count on it.

Our Joint Camp program at Gratiot Medical Center is designed to insure that each patient has the most efficient and safe recovery leading to a successful outcome.

It is very important for me to educate our total knee replacement patients about their recovery and what to expect after surgery.

More Difficult Recovery

Total Knee replacements came along in the early 1970's well after Total Hip replacements. Everyone was thinking that knee replacement patients would recover about the same way total hip patients did. A funny thing happened on the way to recovery after total knee. We soon found out that it takes longer and is much harder for patients.

Why?

Total knee replacement is a unique procedure, as unique as the knee is from other joints in the body. The knee is a much more complicated joint with many parts. The knee is out in the middle of the leg surrounded by tissue and ligaments only. It has to bend, straighten and pivot.

The hip is a simple ball and socket joint buried deep in the pelvis surrounded by tissue and ligaments and many layers of thick muscles.

After surgery the knee is much more ouchy than the hip. Starting to get the picture?

Get Moving

Getting range of motion back after hip replacement is not that difficult over time; and strengthening usually progresses well too.

The process of restoring range of motion and strength in a total knee patient can be challenging. Ideally the knee should fully straighten and bend beyond ninety degrees. This bending amount varies in patients. In addition, strengthening the muscle groups above the knee is critical. It has everything to do with how well the knee will function and how much pain the person will have.

In Bad Shape

So many of the arthritic knees we see are end stage arthritis. Stiffness has set in some years ago and besides the knee is deformed and bowed appearing. The supporting tissues around the knee are thick and sore and in as bad (or worse) condition as the worn out joint surface. In surgery you can only replace the joint surface and all the other structures are left and must be dealt with.

Most of our patients have not a clue about the things I have just said. But these things have everything to do with recovery and a successful outcome.

More to come next week. Stay with me for more positive information regarding recovery after total knee replacement. There is hope!

Good health. Good life. All the best to you.

Be well.

Dr. Haverbush